

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

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AMCONSUL ASMARA IMMEDIATE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 1560

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS CASC ET

SUBJ: TENNECO FIVE

1. SUMMARY. WEDERFORT IN GOOD HEALTH AS ARE REMAINING CAPTIVES. THEY GIVEN GOOD CARE AND TREATED WITH CONSIDERATION BY ELF. WEDERFORT OBSERVANT AND HAS VALUABLE INFORMATION. HE HAS NO SPECIFIC MESSAGE FROM ELF EXCEPT THAT ZEIN IS NEGOTIATOR AND ELF HOPEFUL OTHER CAPTIVES WILL BE RELEASED SOON. END SUMMARY.

2. WEDERFORT ARRIVED KHARTOUM 1700 HOURS JUNE 27 IN GOOD HEALTH AND IN FINE SPIRITS. OTHER CAPTIVES IN EXCELLENT HEALTH AND ARE CONCERNED MAINLY WITH HEARING FROM FAMILIES. WEDERFORT BROUGHT LETTERS FROM FELLOW CAPTIVE WHICH WILL SEND ADDIS. WEDERFORT AND OTHER TENNECO CAPTIVES TREATED WITH CONSIDERATION AND GOOD CARE. THEY ARE FED BETTER THAN ELF FEEDS THEIR OWN PEOPLE. BASIC LIFE IS SPARTAN BUT ADEQUATE. CAPTIVES RELATIVELY FREE TO MOVE ABOUT SINCE ESCAPE IMPOSSIBLE GIVEN FACT POPULACE ALL ELF SUPPORTERS. WEDERFORT AND HIS COMPANIONS HAVE EASY AND GOOD RAPPORT WITH ELF CUSTODIANS.

3. WEDERFOR LEFT HIS COMPANIONS 10 JUNE AND HAS BEEN TRAVELLING TOWARD BORDER SINCE THAT TIME. HE WAS HELD AT BORDER SIX DAYS BECAUSE IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION CAPTORS THOUGHT THEY WERE FIRST
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TO HEAR ABOUT RELEASE OF IEG HELD ELF PRISONERS. HE WAS RELEASED

ON SIGNED ORDERS OF ABDULLAH IDRIS, CHIEF COMMANDER OF ELF MILITA FORCES. HE HAD BRIEF MEETING WITH ABDULLAH IDRIS WHO EXPLAINED PROBLEM TO DATE IN NEGOTIATIONS HAD BEEN INTERFERENCE OF ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT AND UNCERTAIN ROLE OF LOCAL SHEIKS WHO CONFUSED ISSUE.

4. ABDULLAH IDRIS TOLD WEDERFORT THAT INCIDENT OVERNURSES WAS GRAVE MISHAP AND MAN WHO SHOT NURSE HAS BEEN TRIED AND WILL BE EXECUTED. HE PERSONALLY APOLOGIZED FOR INCIDENT. ABUDLLAH IDRIS TOLD WEDERFORT HE HAD STRONG HOPES THAT OTHER CAPTIVES WOULD BE RELEASED SHORTLY. IDRIS TOLD WEDERFORT THAT ZEIN WOULD EXPLAIN STATE OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH TENNECO.

5. WEDERFORT WAS NOT GIVEN NATURE OR DETAILS OF ELF CONDITIONS FOR RELEASE OTHER CAPTIVE NOR DID HE HAVE ANY SPECIAL MESSAGE FOR TENNECO EXCEPT THAT HIS RELEASE WAS EXPRESSION OF THEIR GOOD FAITH. HOWEVER IN NUMEROUS CONVERSATIONS WITH MANY OF HIS ELF CAPTIVES WEDERFOR DISTINCT IMPRESSION IS THAT ELF DESIRE POLITICAL GAINS. THEY MOST ANXIOUS FOR GOOD PUBLICITY AND RECOGNITION. THEY WAN CONCESSIONS FROM IEG AND APPEAR TO APPRECIATE THAT TENNECO LIMITED BUT STILL INFLUENTIAL ENOUGH TO EXTRACT THESE POLITICAL CONCESSIONS. HE STRESSED THAT MAJOR IMPACT ON HIS ELF LAPTIVES WAS A BBC BROADCAST THAT ELF WAS POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND NOT GROUP OF BANDITS. HE BELIEVES PLEDGE OF GOOD PUBLICITY WOULD BE STRONG FACTOR IN NEGOTIATIONS. HE WAS TOLD BY MANY ELF PERSONNEL TH1S LARGE RANSOM WAS NOT THEIR AIM AND MODEST SUM COULD BE NEGOTIATED. THEY STRESSED THEY DID NOT NEED MONEY BUT WANTED ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT TO SHARE RANSOM IN ORDER TO PUNISH AND EMBARRASS IEG.

6. TENNECO FIVE ORIGINALLY CAPTURED IN AILET AREA BY MILITARY UNIT OF SIX MEN WHO PART OF LARGER ELF MILITARY UNIT OF 45. THEIR LEADER WAS CALLED OSMAN. IBRAHIM ALI-NUR WHO MEMBER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND IN CHARGE OF MILITARY TRAINING TOOK CHARGE OF LOCAL SITUATION. HE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY ORDERED BY REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL (RC) TO MOVE CAPTIVES TO CENTRAL STRONGHOLD AREA CONTROLLED BY REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL. ALI-NUR PROTESTED STATING MEN WOULD NOT BE ABLE MAKE JOURNEY. REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL PERSISTED AND TENNECO FIVE MOVED TO PRESENT AREA. THIS CONFIDENTIAL

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OCCURRED IN EARLY MAY. AREA IS APPROXIMATELY 33 KILOMETERS NORTHEAST OF AGORDAT. CAPTIVES ARE STILL IN THIS AREA.

7. WEDERFORT EXPLAINED COMMUNICATION BETWEEN REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL (RC) WHICH IS LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE BODY AND FIELD UNITS IS BY FOOT MESSENGERS AND EXCHANGE BETWEEN RC AND ALI-NUR TOOK THREE WEEKS. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE IS ADMINISTRATIVE ELEMENT OF ELF. FOR EXAMPLE, ZEIN IS MEMBER OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND IN CHARGE

OF PUBLICITY. ALI-NUR IS IN CHARGE OF TRAINING. OTHER MEMBERS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE PERFORM OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE FNCTIONS.

8. WEDERFORT HAD NOT HEARD OF MORGHANI BUT STATED THAT IT WAS IBRAHIM ALI-NUR WHO TOOK POSSESSION OF SECOND HELI-COPTER AND BROUGHT THE SHEIK TO AGORDAT AREA. SHEIK ACTED ON HIS OWN AND IS BEING TRIED BY RC.

9. ELF NOW PREPARING FOR SECOND NATIONAL CONGRESS WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE SOMETIME BEFORE SEPTEMBER. ELF CONSIDERS PLF COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY AND ENEMIES OF ELF MOVEMENT.

10. WEDERFORT IMPRESSED WITH MORALE OF ELF, THEIR TOTAL CONTROL IN AREA OF AGORDAT, AND FACT THAT CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM ELF WORK CLOSE TOGETHER WITH NO RIVALRY. HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THERE ARE ANY PRESENT PLANS TO INITIATE SERIUIS MILITARY ACTION BECAUSE OF PREPARATION FOR NATIONAL CONGRESS. ELF CAPTORS TOLD HIM THAT THEY ARE WORKING FOR INDEPENDENCE IN THREE TO FIVE YEARS AND OTHERS SEE THIS GOAL IN EIGHT YEA
U.

11. ELF CAPTORS SEE PRESENT TASK AS GAINING POLITICAL STRENGTH AND RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT IN ERITREA AREAS NOT TOTALLY UNDER THEIR CONTROL. POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS AND SMALL SCALE GUERRILLA ACTIVITY STILL VERY MUCH THE SCALE OF THE IMMEDIATE PROGRAM.

12. ELF MILITARY UNITS MOSTLY IN UNIFORM EXCEPT WHEN THEY ENTER AREAS THEY DO NOT CONSIDER LIBERATED. THEY ARE ARMED WITH AUTOMATIC WEAPONS OF SOVIET AND BELGIAN MAKE. TACTICAL RADIO NOT IN EVIDENCE AND MOST COMMUNICATIONS ARE BY FOOT MESSENGERS.

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13. SEPARATE TRAFFIC COVERS OTHER DETAILS.

14. OWEDERFORT TOLD ABOUT PLANS HIS ONWARD TRAVEL LONDON. WEDERFORT HOWEVER VERY ANXIOUS REMAIN IN KHARTOUM AND LEND HIS ASSISTANCE TOWARD RELEASE OTHER CAPTIVES. THERE IS NO QUESTION HE WOULD BE USEFUL BUT KHALIFA WHO CONCERNED ABOUT PUBLICITY IS INCLINED AGAINST HIS STAYING. WILL PERSUADE WEDERFORT TO ADHERE TO ORIGINAL TRAVEL PLANS WITH PROVISIO HE BE AVAILABLE FOR ADVICE AND GUIDANCE ON CASE AND BE ABLE TO RESPOND TO CABLED QUERIES.

15. WELCOME ANY SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR WEDERFORT.
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